EDH 7935 Doctoral Seminar – Higher Education

Stages of the Doctoral Study

October 7, 2026

Doctoral Stages

- Stage 1: Admission
- Stage 2: Program Plan
- Stage 3: Classes/Developing Concept Paper
- Stage 4: Qualifying Exams (Prospectus)
- Stage 5: Proposal Defense
- Stage 6: Conducting Research/Data Collection/IRB
- Stage 7: Final Dissertation
- Stage 8: Graduate and Celebrate!

- INSTRUCTIONS: To access links in the PowerPoint, hold down CTRL and click the link.
- The College of Education's page of **Student Resource Forms (link)**
  - **Ph.D. Degree Policies and Procedures: From Application to Completion (link)**
  - **Program of Study (link)**
  - **Rotation of Programs (link)**
  - **Important Dates and Deadlines (link)**
  - **The Graduate College (link)**

Overview of Milestones

- Submit Plan of Study (POS) with advisor approval.
- Complete Chapters 1 and 2 of your concept paper and decide on a methodology.
- Submit paperwork for the Qualifying Exam (Prospectus) **(link to application)**.
- Pass the Qualifying Exam (Prospectus) and be admitted to candidacy. (Ed.S. option if exam is not successful.)
- Confirm dissertation chair and committee.
- Complete and submit **Form 8, Admission to Candidacy Form (link)** to Graduate College.
- Finish Chapter 3.
- Defense research proposal (Chapters 1, 2, 3).
- Once proposal approved, if your research involves human subjects submit IRB application under supervision of your chair.
- Obtain IRB and begin data collection for Chapters 4 and 5.
- Submit **Application for Degree (link)** before published deadline.
- Defend dissertation.
- Once approved by the chair and committee, submit final dissertation to Graduate College.
- Graduate and celebrate!

I. Admission

- Admission is competitive and enrollment is limited.
- Refer to the department website at **www.leadership.fau.edu** for updates.
- Department's doctoral admissions committee selects applications.
- Choose program concentration (School Leaders, Curriculum Higher Education Leadership).
- At this stage, you are a doctoral student **NOT** a candidate yet.
- At the admissions stage for the Higher Education Leadership Ph.D. program, you should have identified a research focus. This topic may not be your final topic, but it is important to have a topic early.

II. Course Advising and Matriculations

- **Advising**
  - Meet with your assigned faculty advisor. The advisor may or may not be your dissertation advisor, but this person will help you develop a program of study.
  - Follow course sequencing, enrollments, and other academic expectations.
  - Do **NOT** self-advise. Follow **the rotation and course expectations (link).** When in doubt, check with your advisor.
  - Develop your **Plan of Study (POS)** to meet course and credit hour requirements.
  - If you do not have a masters in higher education, you may be eligible for the Masters Along the Way.
  - Consult with your advisor **BEFORE** submitting your POS to the Graduate College.
  - When you request a meeting with your higher education advisor, always provide your program plan, your timeline and an agenda so the advisor can be best prepared. Always put your name on papers, date them, number pages and the file names as well.
  - Faculty norms are that they have two weeks to respond to your requests for a meeting or feedback.

II. Course Advising and Matriculation

- **Course Matriculation**
  - Select coursework wisely and follow the recommended sequence and Higher Education rotation on the web.
    - If changes occur in your schedule, your POS can be resubmitted through the Graduate College.
    - Always confirm with your advisor before changing your POS.
  - Solidify your concept paper topic and framework in the Doctoral Seminar. **The *concept paper* will evolve into a *prospectus, a proposal* and the final *dissertation.***
  - You will **NOT** take dissertation credits until you've passed the Qualifying Exam (Prospectus) and are admitted to candidacy. If you do not pass the exam you may apply for the Education Specialist degree (Ed.S.).

III. Qualifying Exam (Prospectus Exam)

- Confirm your necessary coursework is completed. You will NOT take dissertation credits until after passing the Qualifying Exam. You may have limited course work your advisor allows you to take after the exam such as experiential credits or an elective.
- Focus on ensuring you have Chapter 1 (well developed concept paper) and a Chapter 2 (Literature Review) for your Prospectus Paper. The Prospectus paper builds on the concept paper by demonstrating you have a firm grasp of the literature shaping your study and a general focus on how you will address your research questions and more.
- Before applying for the exam, you should ensure your Prospectus paper is strong enough to demonstrate to Higher Education faculty that you are ready for dissertation credits and moving forward with further development of your study. Your advisor will work with you informally about a chair or co-chairs of your dissertation committee, but those roles will not be finalized until you pass the exam.
- **Submit an application (link)** and prospectus paper. Deadlines are on the web for Fall and Spring terms. The exam is not given in the Summer. Higher Education faculty will read your prospectus paper before you will defend it in an oral exam with all Higher Education doctoral faculty.
- During the oral exam, you will present your prospectus (PowerPoint) and faculty will engage in a discussion with you. In addition to focusing on your readiness for the dissertation phase, the faculty will also be available to discuss your committee composition so you will have guidance from Higher Education faculty as a whole..
- When you PASS the exam, you will be and be admitted to candidacy. You should complete the **Candidacy Form 8 (link)** and ensure it is filed with the Graduate College before enrolling for dissertation credits.
    - If you do not pass, you may take the qualifying exam again or go for the Education Specialist degree.

IV. Admission to Candidacy and Forming a Committee

- **Admission to Candidacy (when you pass the Prospectus Exam)**
  - Complete the application for admission to Candidacy. Submit to your chair and committee members.
    - **Form 8, Admission to Candidacy Form (link)**

- **Committee**
  - Dissertation credit hours may be taken once admitted to candidacy. Credits will be taken with your chair/chairs, unless advised by your chair/chairs.
  - You must have a chair or co-chairs to move forward with the dissertation phase. You should NOT recruit committee members until you have chair/co-chairs.
  - Your committee should be chaired by a Higher Education Leadership doctoral faculty member or co-chaired by HE faculty. Non-Higher Education faculty may be members of your committee, but they must have graduate faculty status. Refer to the chair for guidance.
  - Obtain approval from your chair before asking faculty to serve on your committee. When you ask a faculty member to serve as a member of your committee, your prospectus paper should be sent with the "ask" correspondence. Always copy your chair/co-chairs.
    - Minimum of three (3) Graduate Faculty members, including chair/co-chairs.
    - At least two must be from the Department of Educational Leadership and Research Methodology
    - Others may be faculty in other departments and colleges within the university.
    - Chair or co-chair must be a Higher Education Leadership doctoral faculty member.
    - Committee members outside of the university must have graduate faculty status.

V. Development of Proposal & Defending the Proposal (Ch.1-3)

- Once you have passed the Qualifying Exam (Prospectus), you will move to the Proposal stage (Chapters 1, 2, 3).
  - This can be a very lonely stage because this work is independent. A support system can be very important, especially at this stage.
- Work closely with your dissertation chair/co-chairs. You will begin enrolling in dissertation credits with your chair/co-chairs at this stage.
- Ensure the protocols for communications with your faculty and chairs/co-chairs are understood and followed.
  - Allow at least two weeks for faculty to respond to you with feedback on drafts.
  - Persist, be positive and don't be overly offended by feedback. Feedback is good!
- Your chair may ask you to send a developed Proposal draft to the committee for review and feedback prior to the Proposal defense, but you should NOT do so without approval from the chair.
  - Once approved by your chair/co-chairs, you will share the Proposal you plan to defend and schedule dissertation proposal defense meeting.
  - You will NOT announce the proposal defense…refer to your chair for guidance.
- Present dissertation proposal (via PowerPoint) and defend Chapters 1,2,3 to committee. Discuss expectations and who may attend this meeting with your chair.
- It is recommended you schedule a Proposal defense rehearsal with your chair/co-chair. Bring all forms, including the **Approval of Dissertation Proposal Form (link)** to the rehearsal and the defense.
- Your chair-co-chair and committee will complete department's **Approval of Dissertation Proposal Form (link).** If you pass the exam, you will move forward and, if not, you will be allowed to retake the exam or go for an Ed.S. degree.

VI. Conducting Research & IRB Approval

- **IRB (if your research involves human subjects)**
  - You should NOT collect data or submit an IRB request for your dissertation study until after passing the Proposal defense.
  - Your chair-co-chairs may ask you to complete a draft IRB proposal prior to the defense, but you should not do so within the FAU system and only do so for advisement purposes.
  - Work with your chair/co-chairs in completing the IRB application and forms.
  - Submit and process IRB proposal and be ready for minor revisions, if necessary, due to IRB/other factors (work with chair).
  - Chair will be the Principal Investigator, not the student.

- **Conducting Research**
  - Once IRB approved, data collection may commence with chair's guidance.
  - Write Chapters 4-5 (findings and conclusion). Consult your chair-chairs about protocols and expectations as you report your findings and write these chapters. Note that some dissertations may include more than 5 chapters, so follow the guidance of your chair.

VII. Defending the Dissertation

- Confirm readiness of dissertation with chair/co-chairs. You should **NOT** submit the final dissertation to committee members until the chair-co-chairs agree it is time to do so.
- Your chair/co-chairs will make the final decision about your readiness to defense, often in consultation with committee members.
- You will schedule dissertation defense meeting, following the protocols of your chair-cochair.
- You will **NOT** announce the final defense. This announcement is technically the role of your chair/co-chairs. The defense must be announced no later than two weeks in advance. The department, college and university have protocols and processes to do so.
- Ensure all necessary forms are completed, shared, and submitted, in consultation with your chair/co-chairs. Note the Graduate College has processes for review of your dissertation prior to the defense. The ELRM department also has expectations such as a dissertation workshop or meeting.
- Schedule a Final Defense rehearsal with your chair/co-chairs. Follow their guidance.
- At defense, you will defend the entire dissertation. You should focus heavily on Chapters 4-5 while ensuring the entire dissertation is in excellent shape.
    - Committee will ask questions and convene on whether to approve or approve with modification.
    - If you have modifications and pass, you should make those modifications within 2 weeks of the defense.
    - Committee will complete an **Approval of Doctoral Dissertation Defense (link)** form.
- A second defense may be scheduled if the dissertation is not approved or the student may apply for the Ed.S. degree.

VIII. Post-Dissertation Defense Procedures

- Once successfully defended, consult with advisor on post-defense timeline.
- Build in post defense work into your timeline. Refer to the posted deadlines and work backward with your own timeline. Always plan for the unexpected and allow plenty of time at all stages.
- Your dissertation will go through readings stages.
  - Once the chair and committee approve the dissertation, it will be sent to the ELRM Department chair for reading. Then, to the Education Dean and, finally, the Graduate Dean.
  - At all stages, references may be required. You should be prepared to submit those revisions promptly. Allow plenty of time in your schedule for the readings stage. Consult your chair/co-chairs for guidance.
- Always copy and keep your chair/co-chairs in the loop and informed through this stage.
- Do not plan to graduate and go through a ceremony until your dissertation has been approved at all stages.
- Consult the **Graduate College website (link)** for the most up-to-date post-dissertation requirements.

IX. Other Policies

- **Ph.D. Degree Policies and Procedures (link)**
- Leave of absence
- Withdrawal from the program
- Time limit for completion
- Recency of credits
- Request to Waive a Requirement
- Continuous Enrollment
  - Must be enrolled for at least 1 credit hour during two semester each academic year

Graduate and Celebrate!!!



